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*A Letter from Irenopolis*

TO

THE INHABITANTS

OF

ELEUTHEROPOLIS.

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*Ex Libris*

C. K. OGDEN

A

# LETTER

FROM

*IRENOPOLIS*

TO

*The Inhabitants of Eleutheropolis;*

OR,

A SERIOUS ADDRESS

TO THE

*DISSENTERS*  
OF BIRMINGHAM.

*By a Member of the Established Church.*

*Birmingham,*

PRINTED BY JOHN THOMPSON;

AND SOLD BY J. JOHNSON, AND C. DILLY, LONDON.

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## A LETTER, &c.

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: Multa in homine, Demea,  
Signa insunt, ex quibus conjectura facile fit,  
Duo cum idem faciunt, saepe ut possis dicere,  
Hoc licet impune facere huic, illi non licet:  
Non quo dissimilis res sit, sed quo is qui facit.

*Terence Adelphi, Act V. Scene IV.*

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GENTLEMEN,

PERMIT me to address you in a spirit of candour and respect, and under the sacred and endearing names of fellow-citizens and fellow-christians. With intentions not less pure, and, probably, after researches not less diligent than your own, I cannot profess to think with you upon many speculative subjects, both of politics and of religion. But freedom of enquiry is equally open to you, and to myself: it is equally laudable in us, when conducted with impartiality and decorum; and it must equally tend to the enlargement of knowledge and the improvement of virtue, while our sincerity does not betray us into precipitation, and while our zeal does not stifle within us the amiable and salutary sentiments of mutual forbearance. Upon the points in which we dissent from each other, argument will always secure the attention of the wise and good; whereas invective must disgrace the cause which

which we may respectively wish to support. But the principles upon which *we* are agreed, are, surely, of a *more* exalted rank, and of more extensive importance, than those about which we differ; and while that importance is *felt*, as well as acknowledged, we shall welcome every argument, and resist every invective, from whatever quarter they may proceed.

We are convinced, I trust, as to the truth and authority of the Scriptures. But in the interpretation of them, we must be sensible, that the imperious and delusive infallibility, which we refuse to others, cannot be claimed by ourselves. We are satisfied, I presume, about the wisdom and utility of those fundamental principles that distinguish the *mixed* government, under which an indulgent Providence has permitted our forefathers and ourselves to live. Yet, if one class of men are disposed to uphold the power of the crown, and another, to enlarge the freedom of the people, we have no right to conclude, that the former wish to be fettered with the chains of slavery, or that the latter are preparing to let loose the ravages of anarchy. The advocate for monarchy is not necessarily the foe of liberty, nor is the love of liberty incompatible with reverence for monarchy. Experience, indeed, soon puts to flight those chimerical accusations, which issue from the narrow spirit of system, or the frantic vehemence of party. In the hour of trial men cast away subordinate distinctions, as incumbrances to their understandings, and cleave to some vigorous and solid principle, which arrests their common notice, because it embraces their common interests. They cease to wrangle, when they are called upon to act; and they look back with a mixture of amazement and contempt, even upon *themselves*, for all the cavils in which their vanity *once* exulted, and for all the reproaches by which their malignity was once gratified.

Through

Through circumstances which are the result of *accident*, more than design, through the prejudices of our education, through the habits of our thinking, through the conversation of our acquaintance, and sometimes, it may be, through the authority of our teachers, difference of opinion will arise. But that difference, when carefully examined, often resolves itself only into a question of *more or less*, of fit or unfit, as to the time, of proper or improper, as to the mode, of probable or improbable, as to the consequence. It *really* turns, not upon the actual existence, or upon the general validity of principles themselves, but upon the degree, in which they are applicable to some specific and controverted case. As, however, the solution of these difficulties must ever be dependent, not only upon the fluctuating nature of all worldly affairs, but upon the many, or the few opportunities we have for observing their varying aspects, and upon the greater or less ability we employ to comprehend their relations and their effects, there must often be room for suspense of judgment, and there will always be a call for the exercise of charity. On the other hand, impatience of contradiction is both weak and wicked. Instead of facilitating decision, it perpetuates contention. It darkens the evidences, and obstructs the efficacy of truth itself. It originates in a radical defect of judgment, and too often terminates in a most incorrigible intolerance of temper.

I doubt not, Gentlemen, but that you will allow the justness of these observations. I doubt not, but that you are impressed with a deep sense of their utility. But in the application of them to practice, we all see and we all lament, very frequent instances of inconsistency or reluctance even among those persons, who in matters of theory may justly pretend to the fullest information and the clearest conviction.

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The situation, Gentlemen, in which you are placed, attracts the notice of all parties and of all sects in your own country; and the conduct which you may pursue in that situation, must exalt your characters to honour, or depress them with infamy, not only in your own age, but to posterity. By moderation in your opinions, and by prudence in your measures, you may disarm the prejudices of your enemies, secure the protection of your governors, and conciliate the favour of the virtuous and the enlightened. On the contrary, if you swell trifles into bulkiness by a superfluous and turbulent zeal,—if you inflame the animosities which you ought to mitigate,—if you persevere in a frivolous or a pernicious contest, in which retreat would be less inglorious than victory, and victory is less probable than overthrow,—the considerate part of your fellow-citizens will be at a loss to determine whether you are most to be condemned, for the infatuation of your understandings, or for the perverseness of your dispositions.

You stand, Gentlemen, upon a high and an open theatre, where *every* action will be vigilantly noticed, and every motive severely scrutinized. You have more to hope from the stern and solicitous justice, than from the candour or partiality of those, by whom you are observed. You have a very illustrious, and, perhaps, a very difficult part to perform. You are summoned to a triumph, not merely over the prepossessions of your calumniators, but over the excesses of your own passions. You are to vindicate and preserve your *future* reputation, by disproving the heavy charges which have been alledged against your *past* behaviour. You are to meet acquittal or condemnation, from a most awful tribunal, the sentence of which has been hitherto suspended, by *uncertainty* about what you have *done*, and *compassion* for what you have *suffered*. You are to convince a generous, but a discerning publick, that peace

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is equally dear to you with liberty, that you have wisdom to concede, where concession is a duty, as well as firmness not to relax, where relaxation were a crime, that the doctrinal peculiarities of Unitarianism are perfectly compatible with the practical rules of christianity, and that while you applaud the auspicious changes in the French government, you meditate no direct or indirect injury to your own.

These plain but interesting considerations, Gentlemen, are presented to your view by a man, who *has* risqued, and would again risque, the imputation of singularity, of indecorum, and even *apostacy*, by doing to you what is just, and by speaking of you what is true. Though he does not profess himself an advocate for many of your tenets, he can, with sincerity, declare himself not an enemy to your persons. He knows only few among you, but he thinks well of many. He respects you for temperance and decency in private life.—For diligence in your employments, and punctuality in your engagements—for œconomy without parsimony, and liberality without profusion—for the readiness you shew to relieve distress and to encourage merit, with little or no distinction of party—for the knowledge which many of you have acquired, by the dedication of your leisure hours to intellectual improvement, and for the regularity with which most of you are said to attend religious worship. As to some late deplorable events, he *believes*, that you have been misrepresented—he *knows* that you have been wronged—he deprecates the continuance of that misrepresentation, and he now calls upon your judgments, upon your feelings, and upon your *consciences*, to avert the *repetition* of those wrongs.

Such, Gentlemen, is the general purpose for which I take the liberty of addressing you; and in the sequel of this pamphlet, you will find me state, without disguise, and without acrimony, my serious opinion upon the particular event which has induced me thus to stand forward, with

with the zeal, but not the arrogance of a counsellor, and with the fidelity, but not the blindness of a friend.

A report has for some time been circulated in this county, that you intend to commemorate the French Revolution upon the approaching 14th of July. Unwilling I was to believe that report, because I was unable to account for that intention. It seemed to me incredible, that men, harrassed, as you have been, by oppression, and loaded with obloquy, should deliberately rush into danger and disgrace, into danger which you cannot push aside, and disgrace, which, *after such an action hazarded at such a crisis*, you would in vain endeavour to wipe away. For a time, therefore, I disbelieved, and I resisted the report.—I supposed it to originate merely in *conjectures* of what you would do, arising from *misapprehension* of what you had already done.—I ascribed the propagation of it to the busy and mischievous activity of partizans, who are desirous of alarming the ignorant, and of exasperating the prejudiced. I cast it into the common stock of those idle and slanderous rumours, which rise up, we know not where, and disappear, we know not when. I gave you credit for common sense enough to perceive that such a measure at such a time was *unsafe*, and for common moderation enough to *feel* that it was *unbecoming*. In other men I should have called that measure *criminal*. In you, Gentlemen, I thought it *impossible*. But if my surprise was great, when I first received the intelligence, how violent must have been the shock, how deep the concern I felt, upon discovering, as I lately have done, that it was *too* well founded? The primitive christians, in consequence of their invincible fortitude, were by some of their antagonists contemptuously named *Biæothanati*, and by others they were barbarously ridiculed, as *homines desperatæ et deploratæ factionis*. But *they* were actuated by an indisputably good spirit in a *cause* *eminently* good; in a cause which immediately concerned their duty and their salvation; in a cause,

cause, for the defence of which they were *compelled to undergo* persecution, though it does not appear that they were authorised to *court* it. But you, Gentlemen, appear to me to be shewing excessive hardness upon a subject, in which you are *remotely* and indirectly interested.—You seem to provoke opposition, *without* an adequate object. I consider you as plunging into calamity, where you have not the plea of *discharging a duty*. I think, that for the guilt and the misery into which your enemies may be hurried, the chief responsibility must now *recoil* upon yourselves.

Permit me, then, to expostulate with you upon the only arguments which you, probably, can produce for asserting again your *right* to assemble, and at the same time to lay before you the reasons upon which I, without hesitation and without apology, pronounce it your *duty* to refrain from the most *perilous exercise of that most doubtful right*.

It may be said, that you are not forbidden to meet by the laws of the land, and therefore, that your meeting is irreproachable.—I admit the fact, but deny the consequence. A good man, doubtless, will *not* do *any* thing which the laws interdict. But will he therefore *do every* thing which the laws have not interdicted? Will he not consider, that there is a *spirit*, as well as a letter, even in human laws? Will he, without discrimination and without restriction, infer the *tacit approbation* of persons who frame, or persons who administer laws, from the mere absence of *direct* and *specific* prohibition? Will he forget, that an external action may sometimes be accompanied by motives and effects, which, if the law-giver had foreseen them, would have met with the most pointed reprobation? Instead of *rejoicing* that penalties are *not* instituted of *such* a kind as to become equally *snares to the harmless*, and

and checks upon the foward, will he convert the caution or the *lenity* of the law-giver into an *occasion* of disturbing that order, the preservation of which is the supreme and avowed object of law itself? Will he lose sight of the judicious and temperate distinction which the Apostle has established between "things lawful and things not expedient?" Will he not remember, that as a social and a moral being, he is under the controul of obligations *more* powerful and more sacred than the best institutions of the best government? If, indeed, we examine the aggregate of those duties in which our virtue consists, and of those causes by which our well-being is promoted, small is the share, which must be assigned to the efficacy of public regulations enforced by the sanctions of public authority. The soft manners of civilized life, the useful offices of good neighbourhood, the sweet charities of domestic relation, are all independent of human laws. Such are the opinions which we hold, and have a right to propagate, upon abstract questions of politics. Such are the tenets we may adopt, and are warranted to defend, upon the foundations of virtue and the evidences of religion. Such are our attachments or antipathies to public men;---such, our approbation or disapprobation of public measures. Such are our sentiments upon the nice gradations of decorum and propriety,---Such are our principles in estimating the mass of merit or demerit, which determines the character of individuals. Upon all these subjects, human laws hold out to us little light, they impose upon us few restraints, and yet, upon right apprehensions of these subjects, and upon the conformity of our actions to those apprehensions, depend our comfort, our reputation, our most precious interests in this world, and our dearest hopes in that which is to come.

There is not any one action, and scarcely is there any one thought, affecting or *tending* to affect the happiness of mankind, upon which any one human being is *entirely* and *strictly*

strictly a law unto himself. There is a law of *opinion*, which *no* good man will presume to treat with irreverence, because *every* good man is anxious to avoid the contempt, and to deserve the regard of his fellow-creatures. There is a law of discretion mingled with justice, which every good citizen is careful to observe, lest he should interrupt the tranquility, or encroach upon the equitable rights of his fellow-citizens—There is a law of religion, which forbids us to insult the errors, or even to wound the prejudices, of our fellow christians.

You, Gentlemen, understand not less clearly than myself, the existence of such laws: You will acknowledge their importance, not less sincerely; and you will admit that the perverse or wanton violation of them cannot be extenuated before man—cannot be justified before God, by the plea—yes, I must call it, the *futile and fallacious* plea, that we are acting under circumstances, where human wisdom is too dim, and human authority too feeble, to controul our actions.

Here, then, a question arises whether the meeting which you intend to hold, does, or does not, fall under the obligation of those laws which I have enumerated, and the neglect or observance of which you must yourselves confess to have a permanent and a visible influence, in preserving or contaminating our innocence, in promoting or impeding our happiness, in entitling us to praise, or in covering us with dishonour. Now, in my opinion, Gentlemen, such a meeting *is* at variance with your duty as prudent men, with your duty as peaceable citizens, and with your duty as sincere christians.

Many are the situations in which prudence itself is not only expedient, but obligatory; and in the present state of things, it is *not* the part of a prudent man for you to do *again*, what you have *already* done, with so much loss of  
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your property, and so much danger to your persons. It is *not* the part of a peaceable citizen, to provoke again those ferocious tempers, and those outrageous crimes, of which you have yourselves so *lately* and so largely experienced the dismal consequences. It is *not* the part of a sincere christian, to offend, without some weighty reason, even his weaker brethren. Much less is it *his* part to cast upon the rash and wild decision of passion, those speculative questions, which ought to be decided only by cool and impartial reason. *Least* of all is it *his* part, by an unnecessary and unprofitable experiment, *practically to involve thousands in danger, and ten thousands in GUILT.*

Well do you know, that, whether justly or unjustly, such an assembly will immediately bring into review your political and your religious notions, to the utmost possible extent, and under the utmost possible disadvantages.--- But in vain will you make professions of a *general* attachment to the laws and constitution of your country, when for so *trifling an end*, you venture upon such proceedings as will induce other men to transgres those laws, and to maintain that none of you are well affected to that constitution. In vain will you insist upon your sincerity in the belief of the gospel, when you throw *snares and temptations* in the way of other men, many of whom believe it with the same firmness, and contemplate it with the same reverence.

Be assured, Gentlemen, that I have felt disgust, rather than conviction, disgust, I say, from the reproaches, rather than conviction from the arguments, of certain persons, who would oppres you with the *entire*, or even the chief responsibility for the events of the last disastrous year. Unlikely it was that you should foresee all those events in all their causes, and all their aggravations. It was unlikely, that you should suspect certain machinations, which are *said* to have been formed against you in distant

quarters. It was unlikely, that you should calculate by your *foresight*, or even by your *fears*, what you have witnessed by your *senses*; I mean, the most unexampled degradation of the national character, the christian character, and the human character. But the plea of *ignorance* can be urged no longer. *Experience* has shewn you, what men *are*, under the tyranny of prejudice; experience has shewn you, what they *can* be in defiance of law; and if that experience is lost upon your discretion or your humanity, every countenance will blush for your folly, every voice will be raised against your rashness, but for your *sufferings*, believe me, Gentlemen, for your sufferings, no heart, however tender, will hereafter mourn.

You will say, perhaps, that the opposition to you arises from narrow prepossessions, from base intrigues, from calumnious reports. Be it so. But if these evils do *really* hover around you, it becomes alike your interest and your duty to deliberate calmly upon the most proper and the most effectual methods of counteracting them.— If you are surrounded by numerous enemies, remember, I beseech you, that resistance is fruitless, and that retaliation is vindictive. If you are watched by secret ruffians, consider, that their machinations will be defeated, while you abstain from those measures, which, upon a late occasion, made them successful. If you are annoyed by venomous slanderers, reflect, that by doing again, what you have done before, you will furnish new materials for new accusations; and that by doing it under *new circumstances* you will throw around those accusations a more specious appearance, and give them a wider and a more fatal effect.

I mean, not, Gentlemen, to affirm or to deny, that the evils of which you complain, are so great as you represent them. But if I am to suppose them to exist upon the evidence of your own statement, I infer from that *very statement*,

*statement*, the very strongest objections to your own intended conduct.

In the town where you reside, there are many persons, whose talents and whose virtues deserve your esteem, however widely they may dissent from you upon numberless questions, about which free enquirers into truth, and the inhabitants of a free country, ever have differed, and ever will differ. These men do not listen with a willing ear, when your reputations are rudely attacked. Their bosoms are not callous, while they reflect upon those melancholy scenes, when your families were forced from their homes, when your property was plundered, when your houses were consumed in a conflagration which deepened the horrors of the night, and drove back even the splendour of the sun in open day. But, *if you meet again*, the candid doubts of these men, as to the intention of your former meeting, will be supplanted by indignant suspicions, and their pity for your former sufferings will be exchanged for disgust and abhorrence.

I meddle not with the controversy going on between Dr. Priestley and the clergy of your town, so far as it relates to those circumstances which preceded, or those which followed the riots— But those clergymen have professed openly and unanimously to lament the misfortunes which befel you. They have condemned the tumultuous and savage proceedings of a misguided rabble. They have asserted with firmness their own opinions, and with sincerity, I would hope, they have disclaimed all right of controul over yours. To some of them you are indebted for well-intended exertions in the hour of distress, and against none have you brought any accusations, for encouraging the popular fury at *that juncture*, when the act of encouraging it would have been most disgraceful, indeed, to them, *but most injurious to yourselves*. Individually, as you well

well know, one of them is much respected for the depth of his learning, another, for the elegance of his manners, a third, for the cheerfulness of his temper, and a fourth, for the liberality of his spirit. In a collective point of view, they are men who draw down no disgrace upon their sacred profession, either by the neglect of their clerical offices, or by flagrant indecorum, or by habitual vice. Give them the credit, then, I beseech you, of having some regard for the honour of the church to which they belong, for the tranquility of the town in which they live, for the safety even of the congregations which they are *not* employed to instruct, and above all, let me add, for the morals and the souls of multitudes, who are committed to their charge.

By sermons or controversial writings, they have bereaved you, it will be said, eventually of those precepts which you have been accustomed to hear, and of that example which you have been accustomed to admire, in a most venerable preacher, for whom it is no longer safe to preside over a flock, endeared to him by ancient habits of familiarity, and connected with him by many personal, many political, and many religious ties. Into the truth of this allegation, it were invidious and impertinent for me to enquire. But the scriptures, you will consider, still lie open to you. The house in which you did homage to your Creator will soon be rebuilt.—The same freedom which you formerly enjoyed in opinion and in worship, is at this hour secured to you, by the laws; and though you cannot again obtain the honour and advantage you derived from such an instructor as Dr. Priestley, your sect is hardly so barren of excellence, as not to supply you with a successor, whose talents, indeed, may be less flattering to your honest pride, but whose labours will not be less meritorious in discharging the duties of his clerical station, nor less instrumental in making all of you “wise unto salvation.”

I should not think well of your sensibility, if you were indifferent to the loss of so excellent a preacher as Dr. Priestley.---But I shall think very ill of your moderation, if you make that loss a pretext for perpetuating disputes, which if my arguments or my prayers could prevail, would speedily have an end.

Upon the theological disputes in which the Doctor has been engaged with some clergymen of your town, I forbear to give any opinion. Yet, while I disclaim all allusion to local events, I will make you a concession which you have my leave to apply to persons of higher ranks as ecclesiastics, and of greater celebrity as scholars, than your town can supply—that in too many instances such modes of defence have been used against this formidable Heresiarch, as would hardly be justifiable in the support of revelation itself, against the arrogance of a Bolingbroke, the buffoonery of a Mandeville, and the levity of a Voltaire. But the cause of orthodoxy requires not such aids—The Church of England approves them not—The spirit of christianity warrants them not. Let Dr. Priestley, indeed, be confuted, where he is mistaken. Let him be exposed, where he is superficial. Let him be repressed, where he is dogmatical. Let him be rebuked, where he is censorious. But let not his attainments be depreciated, because they are numerous almost without a parallel. Let not his talents be ridiculed, because they are superlatively great. Let not his morals be vilified, because they are correct without austerity, and exemplary without ostentation, because they present even to common observers, the innocence of a Hermit, and the simplicity of a Patriarch, and because a philosophic eye will at once discover in them, the *deep-fixed root of virtuous principle, and the solid trunk of virtuous habit.*

If I mistake not the character of that excellent man, whom I respect in common with yourselves, he would not  
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wish to see you again plunged into mischiefs, which cannot again reach himself.—Spare then *his* blushes, and *his* tears --- Give him the satisfaction of knowing, that you have proved to the world, the wholesome efficacy of his instructions, by your generosity in forgiving those who have *already* been your enemies, and by your wisdom in not offending those, who wish to *continue* your friends.

About the effects of your intended meeting there can be little doubt; nay I should rather affirm, that there can be no doubt, but that the effects will be far *more* tremendous than the effects of your former meeting, and I ground these positions, not only upon the general characters of men, but upon some particular events, which among yourselves have been subjects of complaint.

The age in which we live is distinguished not only for an active and useful spirit of enquiry, but by a fastidious and fantastic turn of mind, which sooths us into *self-approbation* while we deplore surrounding evils, and contemplate distant good. I say not that these illusions may not sometimes *prepare* us for virtuous action, when opportunities for acting exist. But I fear that in *too* many cases, the imagination is indulged, while the heart is not improved. Upon topics relating to public as well as private life, in studying speculative politics as well as in reading sentimental novels, we are often the dupes of secret vanity, and applaud ourselves for ideal or inactive philanthropy. When no interest is to be renounced, no passion to be curbed, no foward humour to be thwarted, we embrace truth, wheresoever we find it, and in theory become the warm and strenuous advocates of virtue. But in *practice*, our exertions fall very short of the rules we have prescribed to ourselves and to our fellow-creatures, and though we are really invested with the power of doing good, we either neglect to do it at all, or we are content to do it with that reluctance and languor which we have been accus-

tomed to condemn in other men. Prepossessions blind us---Antipathies harden us---Passion hurries us into faults, and self-delusion soon provides us with an *excuse*. Now, Gentlemen, as many of your teachers are eminent for having contributed to the general stock of knowledge, and as you are yourselves distinguished by an eagerness to defend and to propagate it, beware lest the want of consistency should lead men to charge upon you the want of sincerity.

You and I must often have looked with sorrow upon the situation of the poor, pinched as they are by want, exposed to delusion, mortified by neglect, irritated by oppression, bewildered in the mazes of error, and involved in the darkness of ignorance. And is it a proof then, of your compassion for their miseries, or of your solicitude for their improvement, that knowing the lower classes of your townsmen to be *still* under the dominion of the same unhappy prejudices, you will again provoke them to the same horrible excesses? I lament, Gentlemen, the unhappy end of those wretches, who suffered for the riots; and can it be your wish, that the dreadful severity of the laws should be inflicted *again*? The publick seems not perfectly satisfied with the acquittal of some persons, who, by means known or unknown, honourable or dishonourable, were rescued from punishment. But is it a mark of your reverence for the laws, that you would again cause them to be evaded, and insulted by evasion? Will Juries, think ye, be more impartial between the prosecutor and the prisoner? Will Judges be more favourable to the one? Will the Sovereign be more rigourous towards the other? No: No. They will see obstinacy hereafter, where they before might only see indiscretion. They will consider you as meeting in defiance of common opinion—as risquing a *great and a certain evil*, for a very uncertain and a very trifling good;—as exposing your houses, your persons, and your families, without the impulse of provocation, and without the prospect of advantage—as calling for *justice*, upon those whom you

you have *yourselves* precipitated into crimes—as staking the pleasures of one afternoon's entertainment, or the exercise of one petty right, against **WHAT?** against laws which, you know, will be transgressed—against lives which, you know, will be forfeited—against the credit of yourselves, and of others who may hold the same political opinions with yourselves—against the counsel of the wise, the arguments of the moderate, and the entreaties of the humane--- Against the safety of your houses and your children---against the judgment and the quiet of your neighbours---against the property and the persons of all the various inhabitants of a great and a prosperous town.

Under such circumstances, Gentlemen,---circumstances, which you cannot but yourselves foresee---circumstances, of which you, probably, have been informed by other men---circumstances, of which you are *now* most solemnly forewarned by me, What, let me ask you, can be your claims upon the justice or upon the compassion of your countrymen? In point of law, you may be entitled to protection and redress. But in point of common sense, you ought to see, that such protection will be *reluctant*, and that such redress will be *scanty*. After a second meeting, you will experience many galling mortifications from which you hitherto have been free. Your cause will *no longer* be the cause of men “who seek peace and ensue it.” Your sufferings will not be the sufferings of persecuted innocence. Your dishonour will be extensive, it will be lasting, it will be just.

I beseech you, Gentlemen, when you read the foregoing sentences, not to misconceive the temper in which they are written, not to confound the earnestness of remonstrance with the fierceness of accusation, not to turn away from me as a declamatory prattler, nor to frown upon me as a virulent calumniator, but to listen to me, I had *almost* said, as a prophet, and I *do* say, as a friend.

Your own good sense will, I am persuaded, tell you, that upon the circumstances of the agent must often depend the quality of the action. And give me leave to observe, that the circumstances, in which *you* are placed, are such as merit the most serious consideration from you, as individuals, as partizans, as subjects who owe obedience to your government, and as citizens who wish for an enlargement of your liberties. Look around, I conjure you, at the storm which is gathering in every part of Europe—at the dangers which impend over the new constitution of France, and at the alarm which has spread, and daily is spreading more and more, throughout the British empire. The tenets of Mr. Paine, most of which I despise as vulgar, and detest as seditious, are gaining ground among the ignorant and discontented. The fears of moderate, and sensible men, too, are awakened by those opinions. The indignation of good men is stirred up against them—The wisdom of parliament has unanimously pronounced a sentence of reprobation upon their principles. The vigilance of government is pointed, and its *strength*, too, I hope, is armed against their possible effects. Surely, then, I need not expatiate upon the probability that your meeting will, by many well-meaning and well-informed men, be associated with the very tenets which Mr. Paine is endeavouring to propagate; and if this be the case, the publick voice may pronounce a late parliamentary decision very just, though, in the estimation of many intelligent individuals, it is *now* considered as harsh.—If you persist in your resolution to assemble, what you may *reasonably* hope, will be refused to you in consequence of the apprehensions which will be entertained of what you most *unreasonably* meditate. Perilous it will be thought to grant, and fruitless even to discuss, that which you openly claim, while you raise up against yourselves a swarm of suspicions, about that which you secretly intend. If therefore, you really wish to be relieved from the pressure of those rigorous acts which hang over the heads of Unitarians, do not frighten benevolent and loyal men from

from becoming your advocates. Do not suffer your religious tenets to be confounded with the seeming tendency of your political opinions united with your political actions. Do not furnish a triumph to those, who have hitherto insulted you, perhaps, without a cause, and censured you without a proof. The justice of your claims, depend upon it, will at this moment be measured by the violence, or the calmness of your proceedings: And from your meeting, *after* what you have experienced, it will be inferred, that instead of meaning solely to celebrate the French Revolution, you are not unwilling to encourage such notions, and to excite such disorders, as eventually may accelerate a Revolution among ourselves.—Far, very far, be it from me *to charge you* with such an intention; and far, also, be it from me to slight the terrors, or to condemn the indignation of *other* men, whom your future conduct after the events of last year, and during the appearances of the present, may induce to load you with such an imputation. If, therefore, you are friends to order, as I believe, you are, endeavour to preserve it.—If you are enemies to excessive innovations, abstain from the *very appearance* of promoting them. If you wish for the favour of government, and the approbation of your fellow-citizens, let not a dinner, or the right of eating a dinner, upon a certain day, or in a certain place, be thought too considerable a sacrifice for the attainment of these substantial and permanent advantages. Gentlemen, for peculiar and obvious reasons, you cannot avail yourselves of a plea which some men have urged in your favour. I will lay it before you, and then I will tell you *why* you cannot avail yourselves of it. If other men dine, as they probably will in other places to commemorate the French Revolution, why may not you do the same thing with the same impunity? Consider, I entreat you, the motto which is pre-fixed to this pamphlet—*In appearance non dissimilis res est*; I grant it to be so—But then the circumstances of him *qui facit*, must be taken into the account. There is not, if I may

I may believe your own representations, so strong a spirit of intolerance in many other places, as for some time past has reigned at Birmingham. There have not been riots in other places, as there have been at Birmingham. There have not been civil prosecutions, and criminal prosecutions in other places, as there have been in this county against the inhabitants of Birmingham. The same suspicions are not entertained of other men in other places, as are entertained of you at Birmingham. The same restraints do not exist upon the disposition of other men to hold a second meeting in other places, which now do exist at Birmingham. My wishes are, that no such meetings may be holden in *any* place, because they are useless to the reformers of France, and offensive to many worthy men at home. But with whatever propriety and whatever effect they may be holden in other places, the action is not the same in your town, because, as I have told you, the situation of the agents is not the same.

When the folly or the wisdom of man has arbitrarily connected certain *signs* with certain overt-acts, they who know, as you do, the connection between the sign and the thing signified, will in vain attempt to sever them by the subtleties of discrimination, or the confidence of denial. I see no *necessary* union between the tenets of Unitarianism and very enlarged notions of political liberty. But the *fact* is, that both are to be found in the same men, and when the passions of ignorant persons are once inflamed, their imagination will pass by a rapid transition from one to the other, and the odium which is cast upon your religion, will rebound upon your politics. In a *general* way of statement, I should not at first have a doubt, why they who assembled together quietly and parted soon last year, should not do the same in the present year: and I am persuaded, that it is your *inclination* to do the same—But the prejudices and the apprehensions of your neighbours, will not *permit* you to do so, and because you are all perfectly

fectly sensible of the terrible effects which must arise from such prejudices and apprehensions, my cool and settled judgment is, that you are *responsible* for such effects.—You, perhaps, will plead, that you did no harm and meant no harm—but there will be numbers ready to reply, that trifling actions have and are intended to have momentous effects, that he who defaced the Emperor's statue, was justly punished, because he meant an indirect indignity to the Emperor himself, that so much ardour, and so much perseverance would not be shewn in commemorating the French Revolution, if they were not mingled with secret wishes for similar events in a nearer quarter. Gentlemen, I would not insinuate, that *you* have such wishes—I believe that all or the greater part of you never harboured them for one moment--But they who live in your neighbourhood, and who will sit in judgment upon your measures, may not deliver a sentence quite so favourable as my own; and where you have so little chance of justice, why will you expose yourselves to flagrant and inevitable injustice?

What, I beseech you, can be the end you propose to yourselves in this entertainment? To indulge in revelry and intemperance cannot be the end, for your characters are marked by the opposite virtues of sobriety and regularity. It cannot be to proclaim your sentiments about the Revolution in France, for they are *already* known, and already reprobated, too, by those to whom they are imperfectly known. It cannot be to multiply converts, for conversion is rarely effected by the unpopular meetings of unpopular men. It cannot be to assert your freedom of thinking upon a subject, where for better purposes than meeting at a dinner you are already free. Study, if you please, the French Revolution in your closets, discuss the principles and the detail of it in your conversation, explain them when misconceived, defend them when misrepresented. Celebrate, if you please, the glorious destruction of the Bastile in your own private houses---pour forth your praises

praises upon the framers and the supporters of the French government---Lift up your prayers to heaven for the final success of the French arms---All this, Gentlemen, will be allowed to you, not only by the laws of the land, but by the laws of opinion. No peaceable man will, for this, condemn you. In this, many enlightened men will sympathize with you. But if you have so little regard for the loyal sentiments, or even the rooted prejudices of your neighbours, so little feeling about your own personal security, so little respect for the general approbation of your countrymen, so little caution in the critical state of your country itself, as in defiance of reproach and in defiance of persecution, to assemble again; where is the man of virtue, who *can* approve of your cause, or where the man of wisdom, who can be satisfied with your excuse?

It may be suggested, that for not assembling, as you meant to do, you will be charged with dastardly submission. But by *whom*, Gentlemen, will this charge be alledged? Sure I am that it never will proceed from men, of sound wisdom, and of pure honour, to whose sentence it becomes you to make your *first* and your *last* appeal. From whom then will it proceed? From silly men whom you ought to despise, from impetuous men whom you ought only to pity and to restrain, or from factious men whom you ought not to imitate. But what, after all, do we discover in this term *submission*, which seems to delude and to scare so large a part of mankind? One being, indeed there is, whom a poet of your own country has thus described in language most luminous and most sublime.

“ Is there no place for pardon left ?  
 “ None left but by submission, and that word  
 “ Disdain forbids me, and the dread of shame  
 “ Among the spirits beneath, whom I seduced  
 “ With other promises and other vaunts  
 “ Than to submit.”

True it is of too many reasonable creatures, and too many nominal christians, that even they are sometimes driven onward to perdition and to infamy, by this infernal spirit of false pride, false courage, and imaginary fidelity to a bad or a doubtful cause. But God forbid that I should impute to you such a spirit, or discover in you even the slightest vestiges of such a spirit. I cannot suspect you of such fatuity, as to be *pledged* for holding a second assembly—I will not accuse you of such phrenzy as to *redeem* your pledge, by the loss of your reputation, or by the hazard of your existence. To whom, also, Gentlemen, is this tribute to be now paid by yourselves? Grant that it were, to a violent rabble whom you can neither appease nor resist—submission would be an act of consummate *prudence*. Suppose that it were to the excessive, but I will not add the dishonest prejudices of enemies and tories—submission would then *approach* to the dignity of *virtue*.---But if it were, as in reality it *is*, to be paid to the wishes of your friends, to the safety of your relations, to the good order of your town, and to the general tranquillity of your country, *Then*, doubtless, submission rises into a *real* virtue, into a virtue of the first magnitude, into a virtue of the brightest splendour. Its nature cannot be misunderstood---its motive cannot be traduced—it will be imputed to magnanimity,---it will be crowned with praise. Farther let me ask, what is the *sacrifice* that you are making by such submission? Is it any political opinion? No. Is it any religious tenet? No. Is it any secular interest? No. It is a dinner, Gentlemen, it is *only* a dinner, and when I reflect upon the trifle it is in itself, or upon the applause you will gain by renouncing it, or upon the danger you will incur by contending for it, I will not offer such an indignity to your good sense, as to press this part of the subject with one word more of illustration or remonstrance.

Gentlemen,

Gentlemen, in the intention of your friends, and in the conduct of your enemies, you will find precedents, such as will justify the *relinquishment* of your purpose, or I should rather say, examples, such as will *exclude* your *perseverance* in it from justification.

If I am to believe Mr. Dadley, several respectable Dissenters last year were disposed to give up their meeting, lest the town should be disturbed. If I am to believe your clergy, the proposal for assembling at a publick dinner in *opposition* to yours, was abandoned at the same critical time for the same weighty reason. But if some of your friends, and some of your foes shewed so much attention to the quiet of your town, when the temper of the common people was known imperfectly, and by mere *conjecture*, it is incumbent upon *you*, to shew *more* attention to the preservation of that quiet, when the violence of that temper is known to you completely and by melancholy *experience*. If the Church and King party then understood their real dignity, and *preserved* it by receding from an ideal, or an imperfect right, let it not be said of the Dissenters, that with such an instructive example before them, they now insult the very persons by whom they were not themselves insulted—that they are more desirous to incur the censure, than to merit the approbation even of their oponents—that they mistake contumacy for firmness, and rashness for heroism. If churchmen shrank from the guilt of hurting a party, let Dissenters shudder at the greater guilt of embroiling a nation !

There is, I confess, one plausible argument which hitherto has been untouched. I will state it for you strongly, and fairly I will answer it. They, whom you suppose, whether justly or unjustly, to be your enemies, have instituted a society under the appellation of the Church and King club, and the tendency, you say, of that society is to encrease and to perpetuate the odium which has been excited

against

against you. Gentlemen, I see little in the tendency of that society which as a friend to the quiet of my neighbourhood, or to the civil and ecclesiastical constitution of this land, I can reasonably commend. But I also see nothing in the proceedings or the professions of that society, which can possibly justify you for meeting upon the fourteenth of July. Let me again remind you of my motto.—They assemble, and you assemble. But the persons assembling are different, and though it may be said with truth, that while their purpose is to support government, yours is not to weaken it, *Still*, Gentlemen, there are many circumstances which will lead to very different constructions, of assemblies which in appearance, and in appearance *only*, are the same. You meet to celebrate the French revolution, which they certainly do not. They meet, perhaps, to discourage an English revolution, which as certainly you do not. Their cause is popular in the town, and yours is not. A *precedent*, then, their assembly cannot be called for yours, and I am equally at a loss to discover, how it should be a *justification*.

Were I to grant you that they meet very often, and were I *ex hypothesi*, to grant yet farther, that the spirit with which they meet is not very friendly to you, I am still unable to find in their conduct an apology for yours. The majority of the town, in all probability, views their meeting with a favourable eye--But the minority have nothing to fear from it, while their own behaviour is circumspect and temperate. Many persons may be unwilling to believe that a system of unrelenting opposition is intended to be carried on against the Dissenters. Nay I am myself disposed to hope, that *not one* member of that club, can seriously wish to see your persons *again* in danger, or your houses in flames. But *whatever* may be their intention, and whatever their wishes, still it is in your power to counteract them by refraining from that perilous measure, which it is the purpose of this address to reprobate and to prevent. By forbearing to meet only for one day, upon your own parts, you may defeat

defeat the collective stratagems, and the collected malignity of many meetings upon theirs. This observation I ground even upon your own statement, for be it remembered, that it is *you*, not myself, who accuse them of such stratagems and such malignity. If they are innocent, I congratulate them. But if they are guilty, I shall not acquit *you*, because the *proof* of that guilt must be accompanied by circumstances which may equally tend to disgrace both you and them. They, Gentlemen, even if they have not a better *cause*, may bring forward a stronger *plea*. They may contend, that the spirit which they have long observed and long resisted in you, is not yet subdued, that it rises superior to difficulty and danger, that it challenges, instead of shunning persecution, that it has incited opposition by past appearances, and that by realities avowed at the present hour, such opposition is amply and notoriously justified. Whether or no, I should myself admit, either the sincerity or the validity of this reason, is of no consequence—It is sufficient for my purpose that they are likely to employ it, and that you may not be able entirely to refute it.

Reflect, then, I intreat you, upon the aggravated mischiefs which must flow from the measure you are said to intend, and consider that you become yourselves strictly and immediately answerable for the *whole extent* of those mischiefs, *if* you distinctly *foresee* them, and foreseeing them are unalterably *determined* to provoke them.—There are situations in which events become so probable, as to carry with them all the evidences, and to draw after them all the moral obligations of practical certainty. There are causes, which, however trifling or harmless in the common course of the world, may from temporary or local circumstances be pregnant with the most baneful effects. But when those effects may be justly apprehended, they cannot be *innocently hazarded*. The club of which you complain, may have been at the expence of much trouble in collecting the gunpowder, and of much contrivance in laying

laying the train. But it is you, Gentlemen, who *apply the fire to it*; and upon whom the explosion may fall, Oh! consider this! *upon whom the explosion may fall*, can be known only to that Being who “seeth events afar off”.

If senseless prepossessions or merciless animosities still prevail among you, can it be supposed that a meeting on the fourteenth of July will either correct the one, or assuage the other? No. But by forbearing to assemble, you will at least hold out to the publick a bright and unequivocal proof, that prejudices and animosities *ought* from henceforth to subside.

It is chiefly from your own representation of your own cause, that I infer the certainty and the greatness of your own danger. If too many offenders were acquitted upon trial, or too few were punished after condemnation, the terrors of the law are diminished among the lower classes of the community. If the damages allowed you upon your late prosecutions, were too little, you must in future look even for less. They who attacked you before, will, certainly, not be intimidated from attacking you now. They who hated you upon the bare *suspicion* of a turbulent temper or of an unbecoming behaviour, will not cease to hate you, after proceedings which, in *their* judgments, will constitute a decisive *proof* both of the one and of the other.

Since the late riots, there has been little appearance of actual reconciliation, or indeed of the slightest dispositions in any of the contending parties to be reconciled. After the lapse of many months, we have heard only of crimination and recrimination, of what you *intended* to do, and what your enemies *have* done, of justice, which, as you say, has been imperfectly dispensed to you, and which, as *others* say, has been dispensed even beyond your deserts. These different statements affect differently the publick mind.

mind. But however divided that publick may be upon past events, it will have *one* judgment, *one* feeling and *one* voice, if in contempt of the very plainest and very worst consequences, you do *again*, what I believe you to have done before, without any sense of guilt, without any intention of committing injury, and without any certain prospect of being injured. A second meeting will avert from you the good opinion, and the good wishes of those who disdained to join in the clamours that were raised against your first, and this consideration *alone* you ought not to neglect. Even if a riot should *not* happen to sweep away your property, still your reputation will be stigmatized on account of such steps as *tend* to provoke a riot.

There are many persons who believe the causes of the late riots to be very deep: many, who have wondered at your *vehemence in complaint*, when compared with your *supineness in action*: many, who have been *taught* to suppose you in possession of stubborn proofs against persons generally unknown or generally unsuspected; many who feel a strong mixture of amazement and scorn, that those boasted proofs have not been brought into open day, for the satisfaction of the doubtful, the confutation of the malevolent, and the conviction of the guilty. The *suppression* of these proofs, if such they be, impartial men are at a loss to reconcile to the known motives and the known tenour of human conduct. They cannot reconcile it to your declarations of having obtained evidence, and to your menaces of inflicting punishment. They cannot reconcile it to the reliance you are *reported* to have upon the *protection* and the *advice* of administration, or to the confidence you profess to feel in the justice of your cause. But if you persist in sheltering those whom you have *already* accused, and *then* proceed to irritate those whom you may accuse *hereafter*, most difficult will it be for you to explain these seeming inconsistencies upon any received principles of upright intention. The unprejudiced observer

observer will be confounded and offended at so much obscurity combined with so much precipitation. The airy witling will exclaim, that however you may reject mysteries in matters of faith, you retain them in matters of practice. Gentlemen, you will excuse me for expostulating with so much freedom. Often have I condemned the violence of your persecutors, and the asperity of your accusers—I have lamented, almost *as often*, a want of openness or a want of firmness\* in some respectable persons among yourselves. But if you venture to rush upon new dangers, instead of overwhelming with disgrace the real and secret authors of your past sufferings, I must think your temerity greater than your fortitude—I must, in respect to the strength of your charges, substitute distrust for belief—In regard to the motives of your conduct, I must exchange apology for condemnation.

The foregoing considerations I chiefly address to your *prudence*. But there yet remain other and *weightier* matters, which I must hold up, at once, to your prudence, and to your *conscience*. Let me then entreat, that you would *seriously* throw back your attention upon what is past, and that with equal seriousness, you would consider what is about to come.

In the past you have seen your furniture plundered--- your papers rifled--- your houses destroyed, by an unthink-

\* Some observations in this paragraph are in *part* obviated by the judicious, though ineffectual, attempt which Mr. Whitbread has lately made to bring the subject of the riots before the legislature. But the very application of the Dissenters for redress of past injuries, constitutes, surely an *additional* and a most powerful reason for their future circumspection. It will appear to many persons, a trick upon the justice, and an affront to the authority of parliament, for men to ask for protection, at the *very moment* in which they are hurrying to the precipice of destruction unnecessarily, voluntarily, and, therefore, criminally. Though parliament, *may* have been wrong in refusing an enquiry, the Dissenters at Birmingham *cannot* be right in adopting such measures as must prevent that enquiry from being resumed with propriety, and pursued with success.

ing and an unfeeling multitude. But the evils to come, I say it again, *the evils to come* will be more numerous in their immediate, and more baneful in their ultimate consequences. The unruly passions of the contending parties have been inflamed by many distant, and by some recent events. The blood of those who have perished, in what the vulgar think a righteous cause, will, from the vulgar, call aloud for expiation. The mischiefs which burst out suddenly, and raged wildly, in a former year, will in the present year be arrayed with circumstances of hideous *preparation*. Among yourselves, probably, dismay will not, *again*, chain down resentment. Among your enemies, fresh and greater provocations will be followed up by fresh and greater outrages—Violence will be repelled by violence....Life will be staked against life---The fire which falls upon your own houses, will spread to the houses of your offending and unoffending townsmen. The havock which breaks out in one town, *will*, in one or two days, pour its fury through the whole neighbourhood---What shoots up a tumult in one county, *may* in one month, or even in one week, grow into a REBELLION through a whole kingdom.

Be not in haste, Gentlemen, to impute these representations to the colouring of a heated imagination, rather than to the dictates of sober reason. *More worthy* would it be of your understandings to reflect upon the probability, and magnitude of the disasters which I have described; and more would it redound to the praise of your *moderation* to avoid all share in the *guilt* of such measures, as unquestionably are likely to *produce* such disasters.

It is the common refuge of detected folly, or disappointed obstinacy to say that men first *predict* evils, because they wish them to come to pass, and then *cause* them to come to pass, by the alarm which accompanies prediction. But for my part, Gentlemen, I disdain to meet such trite and contemptible sophistry, with the solemnity of denial, or the formalities

formalities of refutation. It is condescension enough, and more than enough, to notice an objection, which the weakest man among you is incapable of believing, and which the hardiest man among you would be unwilling to utter concerning myself. Whether I were to publish or to suppress these well-meant suggestions, the loyalists at Birmingham will be displeased at your meeting, the rabble will be incensed at your meeting, and the soldiers might catch the general contagion. By suppressing my pamphlet, I might leave you to indulge the delusive hope of escaping opposition, or of quelling it. But by publishing that pamphlet, I *may* awaken in you the wise and virtuous resolution of not *deserving* to be opposed. Amidst the reports, then, which I hear of your design, and the prospect which I have of your danger, I cannot hesitate for one moment between the two alternatives. Expostulation, at the worst, were only a weakness, but silence must be a crime.

You will believe me not very indifferent about the subject upon which I address you, when I say that the intention of writing this pamphlet was formed on Sunday night last, in consequence of some intelligence which then reached me, and that the act of writing it was begun and finished in the course of the next day. But after bestowing upon the contents two revisals, I found very little which it was then of importance for me to add to the preceding parts of this address, and nothing which it was necessary for me to omit, or even to soften. I, therefore, without farther delay sent the manuscript to press; for as the matter was so intelligible and so interesting, I would not affront your understandings by lavishing decoration upon the stile. — Suspect me not of any intention, to alter or to stifle your opinions about the French revolution. Many parts of that revolution I myself approve, after calm and serious examination. But *no one* part of it would I eagerly adopt as a model for imitation in this country. To me it seems safe and wise to wait for those *gradual* changes, which the spirit of freedom, enlightened as it must be by French experiments,

ments, whether they be immediately successful, or fruitless, and invigorated as it will be by French arms, whether they be victorious or defeated, will most assuredly produce in the temper of every government, and in the judgment of every people.

Within a few days after this book had been committed to the pres<sup>s</sup>, some events burst forth, which ought, I am sure, to drive you from your present purpose, and to encrease your future circumspection. The precaution of reading the riot act, which most unpardonably was *not* taken to protect your houses of worship and your dwelling houses, has been taken very seasonably for the protection of Brothel Houses. The military force which in consequence of proper information given in proper time to proper persons, ought to have been on the spot to prevent the riots in July, 1791, fortunately *was* at hand to suppress the riots of May, 1792. But whether the magistrates would be equally active, or the soldiers equally zealous, in defending *you* from consequences which you certainly must have foreseen, and easily might have avoided, are points, upon which your doubts, probably, are gloomier than my own. And can you then, conceive a situation more humiliating, than that in the hour of distress, conscientious Unitarians should be thought *less* worthy of succour than the shameless prostitute, the desperate bully, and the execrable procurer?

Narrow must have been the foresight, and rooted must have been the prejudices of those persons who could either think with indifference, or talk with exultation of the disturbances by which, in the course of last year, the national police and the national character were alike disgraced. For reasons which at once excite the compassion of the benevolent, and call for the vigilance of the powerful, the lower classes of every community, are in every age, too prone to violence. Permitted I must be to add, with my usual openness, though without any intentional rudeness to you

or to your opponents, that in Birmingham there are many physical and moral, many latent and prominent, many inveterate and recent causes by which the passions of your inferiors are become more ferocious than in other towns of equal or superior magnitude. To men of serious and impartial observation it is unnecessary for me to point out those causes, and to the superficial or the captious they would be pointed out in vain---Intense labour succeeded by frequent and systematic intervals of idleness and intemperance---Political animosities in those who have not even a glimmering of political knowledge---Religious antipathies among those who attend not religious worship---Inflammatory pamphlets and corrupt examples ---The expectation of that impunity which has already been obtained for Rioters --- The idea of merit to Government strangely associated with the commission of crimes against law---These, Gentlemen, are circumstances which peculiarly distinguish the condition of your common people---which loudly demand such exertions as, I trust, will hereafter be made by their spiritual instructors---and which more especially require such caution, delicacy, and moderation, as, I hope, will not be neglected by yourselves. In alluding to these circumstances, I mean not to insult the poor---Many a tear have I shed for their sorrows, and many a plea have I framed for their faults---Rather would I preserve their innocence, than destroy their lives---I would rather see them enlightened and softened by the law of God, than scourged and crushed by the laws of man ---My compassion is due to the poor, but my indignation is reserved for those wretches by whom the poor are deluded or inflamed.

It is a trite maxim, that the mass of the people, however weakly they may reason, are capable of feeling justly. But the misfortune is, that when they have proceeded to act, they seldom continue to feel, or that their feelings are at once excessive in degree, and criminal in kind. Hence in the support of a favourite cause, no enquiry is made about

about the point where right terminates, and wrong begins. Humanity is then extinguished by zeal, and zeal is alike encreased by triumph and by defeat. After our habitual reverence for the rights of individuals and the laws of a country is overcome by temporary circumstances, and the spirit of misrule has once burst its bonds, every slight rumour, every sudden misconception, every allurement from immediate advantage, every provocation from seeming hostility, will be sufficient to change its direction, without diminishing its vigour. The passions of the multitude are fickle as well as impetuous ; or if exempt, in some particular cases, from fickleness, they become more untameable from stubbornness.

That fury which a great provocation has lately turned against the corrupters of good morals, may by a *les provocation*, be pointed with yet greater violence against the followers of an unpopular religion, and before its strength is spent in the extirpation of Dissenters, it may suddenly be hurried by the lust of rapine, or even by the mere wantonness of success, into outrage against Churchmen. *All* parties, therefore, and all sects, are equally interested in discouraging this propensity to riot, by persuasion, in repressing it by resistance, and in averting it by an inoffensive, temperate, and amicable behaviour. Uncandid it were, indeed, to suppose that Churchmen will not be roused by a sense of danger to a sense of duty. It were equally uncharitable to believe, that finding the same turbulent disposition still raging among the same misguided populace, Dissenters will shew themselves insensible to *every* danger, and regardless of *every* duty. The cry of Church and King has, you know, been lately heard in broken and indistinct murmurs, and if you meet again to commemorate the French revolution, that cry will again thunder in your ears, when the storm of public indignation is collected to one point, and when they upon whom it falls with the surest aim and with the greatest force, will be left to perish without refuge and without hope.

It is for you, Gentlemen, and not for myself, to reap either honour or advantage from the relinquishment of your intended measures, and the renunciation of your supposed right. As I give not my name to the publick, you will have the satisfaction of yielding only to the force of my reasoning; and even *if* I were to reveal that name, I believe that some worthy persons among you would not be ashamed of shewing some little deference to the mere personal authority of the writer himself.

That writer is a lover of peace; and of liberty, too, he is a most ardent lover, because liberty\* is the best mean by which *real* peace can be obtained and secured. He therefore looks down with scorn upon *every* species of bigotry, and from *every* degree of persecution he shrinks with horror — —He believes that, wheresoever imperious and turbulent teachers have usurped an excessive ascendancy over the minds of an ignorant and headstrong multitude, religion will always be disgraced, morals always vitiated, and society always endangered. But the **REAL** interests, the **REAL** honour, the **REAL AND MOST IMPORTANT** cause of the established Church, he ever *has* supported, and *will* support, as he, also, ever has contended, and will contend, in favour of a *liberal*, *efficient*, and *progressive* toleration. He confounds not the want of confidence in the measures of an administration, with the want of respect for the *principles* of a government. He distinguishes between dutiful obedience, and abject servility to that Regal power, which, in this country, he holds to be not only conducive, but essential, to the publick welfare. He is not much in the habit of resigning his judgment to the forebodings of the timid, the insinuations of the crafty, or the clamours of the malevolent— Yet he looks, perhaps, with no narrow line of foresight towards events which may be approaching, and upon the present situation of the British empire, he cannot reflect without

\* *Et nomen pacis dulce est, et ipsa res salutaris; sed inter pacem & servitutem plurimum interest; pax est tranquilla libertas.*

CICERO Philippic II.

a pause---without a pang---without jealousy of every opinion, that may shake the fair fabrick of our constitution ---without abhorrence of every measure, that may deluge this land of freedom in blood.

In regard to yourselves, Gentlemen, he means to *warn* rather than to *censure*--- The effect of that warning he consigns to your own wisdom, and to the unsearchable will of that Providence, in subission to which he has ever found the most solid comfort. But in *giving* you that warning he has an entire confidence in the purity of his motives: In *enforcing* it, he boldly appeals to the justness of his arguments: and upon concluding it, he is at this moment conscious of having discharged a most important duty, to you and your neighbours, to the Church and the State, to his country and his GOD.

MAY 17, 1792.

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N. B. For *Bizothanati* which is used by Tertullian, and *Biothanati*, which is the more common word, the reader is referred to Suicer's *Thesaurus Ecclesiasticus*, page 690.

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#### ERRATA.

Page 18, line 13, add "I confess with sorrow" *before that*, in ~~too~~ many instances.

p. 20, l. 29, for *rigourous*, read *rigorous*

p. 25, l. 19, for *inustice*, read *injustice*.

p. 36, l. 18, for *reason*, read *reasoning*

THE END.



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